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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the single 1999 issue and four 2000 issues of a newsletter to communicate the major developments within each sector of the child and youth indicators field. The newsletters feature regular sections on the community, state, and national scenes, and include sections of resources and data. The 1999 premier issue includes articles on the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership; states improving indicators with help from the office of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation; and key national indicators of child well-being. The Spring 2000 issue includes articles on the Kids Count initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, links between social indicators and social programs in Oregon, mapping youth resources from a youth perspective, and the Healthy People initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Summer 2000 issue includes articles on the need for annual evaluation of the social health of the nation, child indicators in policymaking partnership in Maine, measures for community research from the Aspen Institute, and major shifts in the conceptualization of child well-being. The Fall 2000 issue includes articles on the National Education Goals panel, community-level indicators projects, the Center for Child Well-Being, and easy access to juvenile justice data. The Winter 2000 issue includes articles on the 2000 census as a source of child well-being data, availability of state child welfare indicator data online, new indicators of school readiness, local area poverty estimates, and the new Clearinghouse for International Data and Policies on Children, Youth, and their Families. (HTH)

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The Child Indicator: The Child, Youth, and Family Indicators Newsletter, 1999-2000.

Volumes 1 and 2.

Brett Brown and Sharon Vandivere, Eds.

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The Child Indicator

The Child, Youth, and Family Indicators Newsletter

Fall, 1999 Vol. 1, Issue No. 1

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Democratizing Information with Modern Technology: The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership

The contemporary social indicators movement originated in the mid 1960s, inspired by the existence of economic indicators, reports Tom Kingsley of the Urban Institute. Researchers began to imagine how computers might enable them to use neighborhood-level social information to inform policy development. Today, advances in technology and a renewed interest in social indicators have helped to make that vision a reality.

With the assistance of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP), headed by Mr. Kingsley and sponsored by the Annie E. Casey and Rockefeller Foundations, cities are learning to collect and use social indicator data at the neighborhood level. Local partner organizations in a dozen cities are working with the Urban Institute under the auspices of NNIP to develop automated information systems with consistently updated information on neighborhood conditions, including child, youth, and family well-being, in their cities.

Because of their status as independent, non-governmental organizations, data providers and data users view the NNIP partners as reliable sources of information. NNIP partner organizations are "one-stop shops" for a variety of indicators on topics such as employment, births, deaths, crime, health, educational performance, public assistance, and property conditions. NNIP partners will be able to serve as models and provide assistance to other communities interested in building similar data networks.

The seven cities that partnered with the Urban Institute four years ago now have well-established neighborhood data systems (see inset on pg. 4). Five more organizations have recently joined the program in Baltimore, Indianapolis, Miami, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia.

Current NNIP Projects and Activities

Partner cities use their neighborhood data systems to aid in community building and local policy development. Information at the neighborhood level is important, because city-wide statistics may not reveal the different problems and strengths among particular localities.

Comprehensive community building includes the goal of supporting families and children. A few examples of

continued on page 4

Announcements

We welcome your feedback! Please send us notices about upcoming conferences, publications, or events and we will try to feature them in this space. Contact us at **childindicator@childtrends.org** or by mail at:

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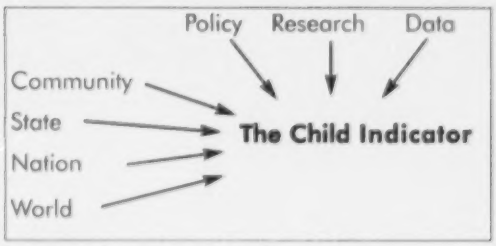
Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the premier issue of **The Child Indicator!**

In the last five years there has been an explosion of activity in the use of indicators to track the well-being of children, youth, and their families. Throughout the country, governments and private organizations at all geographic levels are using them to monitor need, assess progress, hold themselves accountable, and plan for the future. Researchers and data developers are responding by creating new measures and new data sources to keep up with the increasing demand for better data.

During this period of effervescence and growth, communication between and among users, researchers, and data developers has been sporadic at best. This has resulted in a lot of duplicated effort and missed opportunities and is holding the field back from making needed advances at a crucial time in its development.

The goal of our new newsletter is to communicate the major developments within each sector of the child and youth indicators field to the larger community of interested users, researchers, and data developers on a regular basis. Each issue will include articles on projects and programs using child and youth indicators at the national, state, and community levels, with occasional reports on international projects. In addition, new developments in scientific research and data development will be featured, with an emphasis on what it means for users. Useful resources including publications, web sites, and listservs will be described and contact information provided. By promoting the efficient sharing of knowledge, ideas, and resources, **The Child Indicator** seeks to advance understanding within the child and youth indicators community and to make all its members more effective in their work.



Child Trends, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research center that has been active in the child and youth indicators field for 20 years, produces and distributes **The Child Indicator** with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We welcome your comments and suggestions. All communications regarding this newsletter can be directed to childindicator@childtrends.org.

Brett Brown, Ph.D. and Sharon Vandivere, Editors

State Scene

States Improving Indicators with Help from ASPE

As state and local governments take on more responsibility for the design and implementation of social programs, many are looking to child and family indicators as tools for monitoring, program planning, tracking progress towards goals, and for assessing performance.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, launched an initiative in 1998 to assist states' efforts to use indicators to monitor children's health and well-being and to institutionalize the use of child and family indicators in state and local policy work. Thirteen states have received grants of up to $50,000 per year for 2 years to carry out indicators projects of their own design. A fourteenth state is funded by the Packard Foundation. Grantees are:

Alaska	California	Delaware	Florida	Georgia	Hawaii	Maine
Maryland	Minnesota	New York	Rhode Island	Utah	Vermont	West Virginia

Each project involves the cooperative efforts of multiple state partner agencies. Partnerships include agencies with lead responsibilities for children's programs including health, education, welfare, and income support. Representatives of local governments, state universities, and state Kids Count organizations are also involved in many states. Some already have relatively advanced projects that are being extended or refined in some way through the grant, while others are taking the opportunity to initiate new efforts in their state. *continued on page 5*

America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being

In 1997, President Clinton issued an Executive Order that included a call for federal statistical agencies to produce an annual compendium of indicators of American children's well-being. This summer, the Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (the Forum) released *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 1999*, its third annual report on national estimates of trends in children's well-being.

The 1999 report includes six indicators of the population and family context in which children live and 23 indicators of child well-being. General areas of child well-being covered in the report include:
- Economic security,
- Health,
- Behavior and social environment, and
- Education.

Most indicators include historical data so readers can examine trends over time. Line graphs and/or bar charts accompany all of the indicators, summarizing the data and conveying useful information to readers at a glance. Brief textual descriptions provide explanations of the meaning and importance of each indicator and alert readers to the current status of children, differences among subgroups, and changes or lack of change in trends over time.

Each report includes at least one special feature indicator. These are indicators the Forum considers to be important but for which data are not collected regularly. This year's edition features an indicator related to disability, reflecting children who have difficulty performing everyday activities. Topics featured in earlier editions included child abuse and neglect, blood lead levels, and child care.

How to obtain a copy of *America's Children*:
- HTML browsable and PDF copies: http://childstats.go
- Printed copies: National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse at (703) 356-1964 or nmchc@circsol.com for a free copy, or, if free copies run out, the Government Printing Office (http://www.gpo.gov or (202) 512-1800, publication number 065-000-01162-0 again, while supplies last).

(This article draws on comments provided by Katherine Heck, Chair of the Reporting Committee for the Forum's 2000 report, and on: *Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, America's Children: Key National Indicators of Children's Well-Being, 1999*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.)

Research Takes

Indicators of Children's Well-being

A new generation of research is developing around the identification and development of key indicators of child, youth, and family well-being. *Indicators of Children's Well-being*, edited by Robert M. Hauser, Brett V. Brown, and William Prosser, presents the collected wisdom of more than twenty of our nation's top researchers in the areas of child and youth health, education, social development, economic security, and family demography.

Each chapter identifies the key indicators of well-being in its subject area based on the best research in that area. In addition, authors identify important aspects of well-being (e.g., school readiness, mental health) where good indicator measures are currently lacking.

While it is an excellent introduction to the field, those who use indicators for practical purposes will also find this book an excellent guide for choosing indicators. Data collectors will find it useful for developing surveys and for administrative data that will be used to track child and youth well-being.

Available from the Russell Sage Foundation: http://www.russellsage.org/publications

Resources

Websites

ChildStats.gov - http://childstats.gov - The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics website has an extensive listing of contacts who manage statistics at agencies concerned with population and family characteristics, economic security, health, behavior and social environment, and education issues.

Kids Count - http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/ - Kids Count is The Annie E. Casey Foundation's project that tracks the well-being of American children on the national, state and city levels. The website includes special reports, overviews of annual databooks, and an interactive online database including all the data from the 1999 Kids Count data book.

Listservs

Connect for Kids - http://www.connectforkids.org/listserv1579/listserv.htm - Users have the option of subscribing to either of two newletters, the Connect for Kids Weekly or Connections, a monthly e-mail bulletin that highlights original articles, profiles and interviews. The website also has a helpful, state-by-state database that provides links to organizations collecting and disseminating key indicator data on child well-being.

Publications

Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth - This is an annual report, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, aimed at tracking the trends of child and youth well-being across the U.S. Intended to inform policy makers, the media, and the public, it is an extensive compilation of data on the following indicators: population, family, and neighborhood; economic security; health conditions and health care; social development, behavioral health, and teen fertility; and education and achievement. Visit the Trends report site: http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/98trends/trends98.htm or call (202) 619-0257.

The Right Start: Conditions of Babies and Their Families in America's Largest Cities - The new report, to be released December 16th, provides indicators based on birth certificates for 55 large cities. Free copies are available by calling the Annie E. Casey Foundation publication line at 410-223-2890.

Democratizing Information, continued from page 1

the implementation of this goal follow:

▪ **Boston Children and Families Database (BCFD).** The idea for the BCFD evolved through a collaborative process involving project staff, community-based organizations, non-profit service providers, and data providing agencies. Groups selected about 800 variables to include in the system based on a complete list of variables available from the Census and a number of administrative files. The Boston Foundation has cleaned the data, made the data available to the public, and prepared a user's manual. Jim Quane and William Julius Wilson of Harvard University are currently conducting a study on welfare reform and children's well-being in Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco. They used the BCFD to familiarize themselves with Boston neighborhoods in preparation for interviews with low-income families. On the Boston Foundation's website, Dr. Quane says, "Because we are using a neighborhood approach to our study, we needed detailed information on Boston's neighborhoods. To create an integrated database like this would have taken an enormous amount of time and effort. We worked in Chicago for several years and got nowhere near the level of information we had here almost as soon as we arrived." Additionally, staff at the Codman Square Health Center have used the BCFD to create a demographic profile of the community they serve.

▪ **The Urban Strategies Council (USC) Data Unit (Oakland).** The Data Unit combines data from administrative records and census data to create citywide reports, customized analyses, and maps tailored for users' needs. Agencies are often willing to share their administrative data with the USC to take advantage of the USC's advanced mapping capabilities. One such early project, updated with more information in 1995, is called *A Chance for Every Child*. This report includes information about children in poverty in Oakland.

▪ **The Piton Foundation Neighborhood Facts (Denver).** The Piton Foundation supported the Colorado Department of Health and Human Services in implementing the early phase of the 1993 Family Preservation Act, which required assessment to determine community characteristics that influence risks of child maltreatment. *Neighborhood Facts* used 16 indicators of economic, family, stress, and violence risks and 10 indicators of children and family service capacity to create risk profiles for Colorado counties and Denver neighborhoods. Federal resources were directed to communities based on these risk profiles. The state will continue to use the indicators to track improvements.

▪ **Cleveland Community Building Initiative.** The NNIP Cleveland partner facilitated this initiative, which resulted in a list of 110 indicators in five areas, including family, child, and youth development. Mr. Kingsley presents this list in a guidebook as a good "starting point" for other groups interested in developing indicators inventories. However, this ideal list also represents the challenge many cities face: about half of the indicators are not available from census or local administrative files and are thus expensive to obtain.

Atlanta: The Atlanta Project
http://www.cartercenter.org/atlanta.html

Boston: The Boston Foundation
http://www.tbf.org/

Cleveland: Center on Urban Poverty and Social Change, Case Western Reserve University
http://povertycenter.cwru.edu/cupscin.htm

Denver: The Piton Foundation
http://www.piton.org/

Oakland: The Urban Strategies Council
http://www.urbanstrategies.org

Providence: The Providence Plan
http://www.providenceplan.org/

Washington, DC: DC Agenda
http://www.dcagenda.org/

NNIP Resources Available to You

▪ **Web Site.** The NNIP has developed a web site that allows a broad audience to have easy access to support. The page is available at http://www.urban.org/nnip/index.htm.

▪ **NNIP News.** This listserv began in August 1999. A moderator monitors relevant online information sources and posts updates, including information about the U.S. Census, American Housing Survey, indicators, community building, welfare reform, and housing policy. Subscribing neighborhood indicator practitioners can also post comments and questions regarding, for example, developing and using indicators, data sources, using information to effect community change, presenting and using data effectively, and helping community organizations understand and use data. (If you are interested in subscribing to NNIP News, check http://www.urban.org/nnip/nnip_news.html or e-mail nnip@ui.urban.org to find out if the listserv would be appropriate for you.)

▪ *Building and Operating Neighborhood Indicators Systems: A Guidebook*. This guidebook contains useful information on the background and development of neighborhood indicators. It describes selected projects of the seven NNIP partners and will give you an idea of the variety of ways that you can use neighborhood indicator data. You can download the guidebook and other helpful publications from the new NNIP web site.

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Democratizing Information, continued from page 4

The Future

In addition to producing materials that aid cities in developing neighborhood indicator data systems, NNIP is developing a National Neighborhood Data System (NNDS) with information on the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas. The NNDS includes census-tract and zip-code-level indicators drawn from the data systems of the seven original NNIP partners as well as data from major national sources. Urban Institute researchers can pull data for a particular city from the NNDS as a "starter kit" for any city that would like to develop a social indicator data system. Currently, the NNDS is not available for outside dissemination, but it may become publicly available in the future. A particular purpose of the NNDS will be examining inner-city neighborhoods to track how they have changed throughout the 1990s and in the future.

NNIP's ambitious goals for the future include:

- Develop materials that will assist residents of distressed neighborhoods in using new information technologies;
- Continue to conduct inter- and intra-city analyses of spatial patterns and neighborhood dynamics to inform policy-makers and service-providers;
- Create recommendations for developing local indicators; continue the development of relatively new neighborhood-level indicators in areas such as health, arts and culture, environment, and government program performance measures;
- Improve methods for integrating statistical indicators with asset mapping;
- Collaborate with the U.S. Census Bureau on the development and use of neighborhood-level administrative data with the new American Community Survey; and
- Continue to provide technical assistance to cities building local indicator systems.

(This article draws heavily on materials provided by Tom Kingsley, including: Kingsley, G. Thomas. 1999. *Building and Operating Neighborhood Indicators Systems: A Guidebook* (draft).

States, continued from page 2

Project activities common to many of the state efforts include:

- Creating a common set of goals for improving child well-being across participating state agencies and identifying the indicators needed to track progress towards those goals;
- Encouraging the use of social indicator data by public and private agencies at the state and local levels for planning and policy making;
- Assessing the adequacy of current sources of data (administrative and survey) and developing the means to track key child outcomes that are not supported by existing data collection systems; and
- Developing dissemination vehicles for child indicator data, including regular publications and searchable databases on the World Wide Web to serve policy makers and the general public.

The state of Georgia, for example, already has a well-designed indicators program tracking trends in 26 indicators of child and family well-being at the state and county levels. Georgia is using the ASPE grant to identify and develop new indicators that will be more sensitive to program and policy changes in areas such as welfare reform (TANF), child care, and the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP). These new measures will then be linked to the 26 indicators from the existing system in a common conceptual framework so that progress in specific policy areas can be meaningfully related to broader state goals for improving the lives of Georgia's children and their families.

The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, a nonprofit research center with a history of work in the social indicators arena, is providing technical assistance to the states. Chapin Hall has convened a number of meetings of grantees to encourage states to discuss the barriers they faced and to identify progress in particular areas, allowing these states to serve in a leadership/resource role for the other states.

Other efforts under way among participating states to develop and refine indicators include several of the New England states working collaboratively with the Carnegie Foundation's *Starting Points* states to pursue the areas of school readiness and child care. Georgia, Minnesota, New York, and West Virginia, as participants in both the ASPE Indicators project and the Family Resource Coalition of America's State's Initiative, are working with other states on promotional or asset-based indicators.

Although there are no immediate plans to expand the project beyond the current set of participating states, ASPE is committed to encouraging states' efforts to broadly track the health and well-being of children using indicators. ASPE plans to share lessons learned from this project with other states interested in indicator work. Descriptions of the state projects and contact information are available on the ASPE web site at: http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/cyp/cindicators.htm.

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Data Takes

The American Community Survey

Once every ten years the Census provides users with a flood of useful economic, demographic, social, and housing data down to the neighborhood level. Unfortunately, these data quickly become outdated with no real alternative for state and local estimates for the remainder of the decade. The American Community Survey (ACS) promises to change all this, providing the same information on an annual basis for states and communities with populations of 65,000 or more. Annual estimates at the neighborhood level and for rural areas will be available within five years.

The ACS, when it becomes fully operational, will represent a revolution for neighborhood-, community-, and state-level governments and other organizations that depend on social indicator data for monitoring need, tracking well-being, planning and evaluating programs, and related activities. Estimates will soon be available for 31 test sites around the country. The survey is scheduled to be fully implemented in 2003 and will interview three million households throughout the country each year.

The first estimates are scheduled to be available in the middle of 2004. Estimates at the neighborhood level will be available beginning in 2008. A goal of the Census Bureau is to release annual estimates within six months after the interview data are collected. Tables and microdata will be accessible through the American Factfinder, the Census Bureau's new, user-friendly data access and dissemination system.

Initially, the ACS will provide information similar to the detailed information collected by the Census long form, which it is intended to replace by 2010. After 2003, additional measures, such as data on child health insurance coverage, early child care, and other topics of interest to national, state and community planners, may be added.

For additional information, visit: http://www.census.gov/acs/www. Questions should be directed to ACS staff at (888) 456-7215 or e-mailed to ACS@Census.gov.

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The Child Indicator

The Child, Youth, and Family Indicators Newsletter

Spring 2000 Vol. 2, Issue No. 1

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KIDS COUNT Comes of Age

For over a decade the KIDS COUNT initiative has been tracking the well-being of children and families at the state and local levels using statistical indicators. The major goal of the KIDS COUNT project is to put high quality data into the hands of policymakers, government officials, service providers, journalists, and citizens so that all may make more informed decisions regarding policies, programs, and individual behavior affecting the lives of children and youth. (KIDS COUNT includes grantees in 48 states and the District of Columbia as well as a national effort located at the Annie E. Casey Foundation.) These data are disseminated in annual data books, special topic reports, report cards, fact sheets, and, increasingly, over the Internet as searchable databases. Collectively they represent a critical data resource for decision-making at the national, state, and county levels.

Organizations interested in producing similar products will find in these publications many examples of effective data presentation for a variety of audiences. In addition, the grantees have formed peer assistance networks for technical assistance, information sharing, and self-evaluation, and they are developing practices and products that will interest other organizations that use and disseminate indicator data.

Who is KIDS COUNT?

The Annie E. Casey Foundation supports the KIDS COUNT Initiative by providing grants and staff support to state KIDS COUNT projects. Dr. William O'Hare oversees the Initiative for the Foundation and is responsible for the production of the national data book, which is released each spring. Working closely with Dr. O'Hare, Jennifer Baratz Gross directly oversees the work of the state KIDS COUNT grantees for the Foundation. The KIDS COUNT networking functions are facilitated by Debbie Morgan based at the National Association for Child Advocates.

In most states the KIDS COUNT effort is led by a state child advocacy group, though government agencies and university-based institutes take the lead role in some cases. Many of the advocacy groups have joined with "data partners" in state agencies or university-based organizations to produce their data books and related products, though increasingly such work is being taken on in-house.

Communicating the Data: Data Books and Other Publications

The most visible part of the KIDS COUNT Initiative is the annual KIDS COUNT Data Book published by the Casey Foundation. The national book features trends in

continued on page 4

Announcements

Child Trends has just produced an inventory of over 90 child, youth, and family indicators projects including basic descriptions, publications, web sites, and contact information.

See "Resources" on page three.

Letter from the Editors

Welcome to the second issue of **The Child Indicator**, covering the important developments in child and youth indicators application, research, and data development around the country. Our current issue features the KIDS COUNT initiative as it enters its second decade, the launch of Healthy People 2010, the work of researcher Clara Pratt on indicators linking programs to outcomes for children and families, an exciting project that engages youth to collect data on resources in their own community, and efforts by the Search Institute and the state of Vermont to measure positive indicators of youth development.

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Brett Brown, Ph.D. and Sharon Vandivere, Editors

State Scene

Social Indicators and Social Programs: Researcher Forges New Links in Oregon

For over ten years the state of Oregon has been a leader in the use of social indicators to guide state- and community-level planning. Through its Benchmarks initiative, the state is tracking progress towards broad economic, social, and quality-of-life goals using 90 key indicators, including 20 specifically related to the well-being of children and youth. Progress on any one of these benchmarks (for example, the teen birth rate) can be affected by government policies and programs across many agencies, as well as by economic and social forces completely outside of government. The virtue of the benchmarks approach is that it encourages diverse actors inside and outside of government to focus on a limited set of common goals, increasing the likelihood that progress can be made. When used to their fullest potential, benchmarks are the "magnets that align programs."

Interim Indicators. The virtue of the Benchmark approach may also be its greatest potential limitation. Indicators that can be affected by many groups make poor measures for the effectiveness of any specific program or agency. For this purpose a second tier of indicators is needed, linked by research to benchmarks yet reflecting the work of particular agencies and organizations. This is the work of Clara Pratt, Professor of Family Policy in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. In cooperation with the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (OCCF), Dr. Pratt and her colleagues have been doing meta-analyses of existing research to identify what they call interim program outcomes and related indicators that are empirically tied to benchmarks that monitor child and family well-being. "We are trying to help agencies figure out what their part of the elephant is," states Dr. Pratt. Research is used to identify realistic and achievable outcomes and related indicators that can show improvement over a particular time period given a program or agency's type of service or intervention. Finally, unlike benchmarks, which often change only slowly, interim outcomes and indicators must be sensitive to short-term change so that movement in the indicator can be linked to current program efforts. Dr. Pratt and her colleagues look especially for evidence of such sensitivity in their efforts to identify suitable measures.

For example, the Oregon Benchmarks outline the important goal of positive youth development through multiple benchmarks, including reductions in teen pregnancy. This issue is a concern to diverse state- and community-level groups in the areas of education, health, religion, and youth development. For a local health clinic, for example, the benchmark of teen pregnancy is addressed by the interim outcome of "the proportion of local sexually active youth using effective contraceptive methods with every intercourse." The indicator for this outcome may be a health department survey of participants or a school health survey of all youth, such as the federal Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Both outcomes and indicators must be linked by research to the broader benchmark and be achievable given a specific service such as reproductive care.

Research Needs. Dr. Pratt believes that researchers have much to contribute to the field of social indicators. There is a strong need to expand the research base supporting the identification and development of interim indicators. While the interest among academics in such research has increased, many remain reluctant to pursue

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Mapping Youth Resources from a Youth Perspective

by Mark Littman

A unique approach to data gathering and analysis of community resources for youth has been developed by the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research (the Center) at the Academy for Educational Development (AED), a nonprofit service organization in Washington, DC: Let the youth themselves collect the data.

Called *Community YouthMapping*, the program provides the opportunity for teenagers to identify, rate as to "youth-friendliness," and geographically map the concentration of resources in their own communities. With assistance from adults in the planning process, *YouthMappers* conduct interviews and compile information about local resources, which vary considerably depending on the community. They might include after-school education facilities and other safe places to study, employment centers, drug and alcohol treatment centers, teen clubs, health facilities, as well as a variety of businesses that adults might not ordinarily recognize as a safe, positive place for youth. For example, Raul Ratcliffe, Program Officer for *YouthMapping* at the Center, related a story of a pool hall in one community that offered an alcohol-free teens-only night every week even though pool halls were usually excluded from mapping projects. In New York City, youth included a funeral parlor in their list of resources because they had grown used to attending funerals of their peers. *YouthMapping* projects have been conducted in 33 areas to date, including large cities such as Baltimore as well as smaller ones such as Alexandria, Virginia.

Each community's mapping project is funded locally, typically by a collaborative effort between private and public agencies. The Center, however, provides a training program for *YouthMappers*, including exercises in team building, conflict resolution, interacting with business people, and interviewing skills. In addition, the Center offers suggestions on how to use and disseminate the information once collected, including the use of geographic information system (GIS) software that can be customized to fit the needs of different places or neighborhoods. Communities are encouraged to institutionalize the effort as a means of updating the information collected. It is AED's hope that such a program and database will not only provide an opportunity for youth to learn about their communities and work together with adults, but provide "a catalyst for influencing youth development policy, practice and resource allocation."

One means of data dissemination developed by the Center is *YouthLink*, an interactive website (http://www.youthlink.org) that contains easily accessible youth information. Another way of getting the information out to teenagers are *YouthStations*, interactive computer kiosks that have data on services for youth. Detroit has three such *YouthStations* in operation now. Local *YouthLines* are another means of handling requests for information such as jobs, tutoring, or crisis referral, but through person-to-person contact over the telephone rather than via computer. Current *YouthLines* are in operation in Boston, New York, and San Francisco.

Communities or individuals interested in further information about *Community YouthMapping* should visit the Academy for Educational Development website at http://www.aed.org.

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Resources

Publications

Indicators of Child, Youth, and Family Well-being: A Selected Inventory of Existing Projects - This inventory provides useful information on over 90 social indicators projects at the national, state, and local levels focussing on children, youth, and their families. These include a wide range of projects related to governance, data development, research, and technical assistance. Each entry provides a brief description and project classification, major publications, website addresses, and contact information. The inventory, produced by Child Trends with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, can be downloaded at http://www.childtrends.org/r_invres.cfm. In addition, a limited number of hardcopies are available. Please contact Erik Michelsen at (202) 362-5580.

Websites

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) provides estimates of health risk behaviors of youth for the nation, 39 states, 16 cities, and four U.S. territories. Behaviors related to injury, tobacco use, sexual behavior, physical activity, alcohol and other drug use, and unhealthy dietary behaviors are monitored for youth in grades 9-12. A description of the survey, publications of the data, questionnaires, and a CD-ROM containing 5 years of YRBS data area available at http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/ov.htm.

KIDS COUNT, continued from page 1

child well-being for each state and the District of Columbia based on 10 key indicators. The indicators are comparable across states, allowing for direct comparisons and ranking. Data for these indicators are taken from Vital Statistics and selected national surveys. Additional background data are provided on a number of topics that tend to change from year to year and that are not used for ranking.

Data books produced by state KIDS COUNT projects follow a similar format with comparable data presented for each county in the state. Many state data books feature a broader set of measures and indicators than those contained in the national publication due to the frequent availability of rich data sets within individual state data systems.

Many of the data books begin with an overview highlighting an issue of special interest within the state or the country such as child care, education, or child health. In 1999, for example, the national data book focused on children at high risk of negative outcomes. In these overviews, data on child well-being are often presented in terms of their implications for social policy and community action. Successful programs may be highlighted, important principles underscored, and specific public policies recommended. Data books never endorse legislation.

The Foundation also publishes special reports on specific topics. For example, the Foundation recently released a KIDS COUNT Special Report called *The Right Start: Conditions of Babies and Their Families in America's Largest Cities*, which focused on data from birth certificates in 55 large cities. Many state groups also have produced briefs and fact sheets on special topics. A listing of special reports available from the state organizations is maintained by the KIDS COUNT Network Coordinator and can be found at http://www.childadvocacy.org/kcsprpt.pdf.

National KIDS COUNT data products can be ordered directly from the Foundation either online (http://www.aecf.org/publications/index.htm) or by phone (410-223-2890). State data books, special reports, and other publications can be ordered directly from the individual KIDS COUNT organizations. For a listing of state KIDS COUNT projects, please contact the KIDS COUNT Network Coordinator (morgan@childadvocacy.org) or visit the Annie E. Casey Foundation website (http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/index.htm).

Moving Indicator Data to the Web

KIDS COUNT groups have recognized the growing importance of the World Wide Web as a medium for dissemination, and most now have their own websites. Some are making their data books (in whole or in part) and special reports available as PDF files that can be downloaded for free. The national program and some state KIDS COUNT projects have gone one step further, offering the data in a searchable database that can be used to create custom tables and graphics to meet the specific needs of users online. The national KIDS COUNT data can be accessed at http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc1999/.

The Indiana Youth Institute is one of several state KIDS COUNT projects that have put their data online as a searchable database. In addition, it offers county profiles from the data book that can be downloaded as PDF files. This technically advanced and well-designed site can be found at http://www.iyi.org/.

Organizing a Peer Support Network

The state KIDS COUNT organizations have always looked to each other for support and to discuss issues of common interest. In the past this has happened through annual meetings, a listserv, and through more informal means. In the last couple of years, however, more formal networks have developed around particular issues with working groups formed on technical assistance, self-assessment, and information sharing.

The KIDS COUNT Technical Assistance working group is compiling a resource kit covering topics such as data collection, communication strategies, and the use of technology in reporting data. Though intended primarily to assist new KIDS COUNT staff, it will provide a lot of useful information for any group interested in producing state or community level reports on children and youth for broad audiences. The kit is expected to be available by April 2000. Those interested in a copy should contact the KIDS COUNT Network Coordinator at morgan@childadvocacy.org.

The KIDS COUNT Self-Assessment working group is working with Innonet (http://www.innonet.org) to produce project self-assessment tools that will allow state KIDS COUNT groups to evaluate their internal operation and external effectiveness in reaching project goals. While these self-assessment tools have been specifically created for the state KIDS COUNT groups, they can likely serve as a useful template for other indicator-focused projects with similar aims. The assessment tool to evaluate internal operations is available at the Innonet website (http://www.innonet.org/tools/learn.html).

The third working group is concerned with information sharing. One of its primary aims is to test strategies for sharing information and best practices among the network. They have explored strategies such as teleconferencing, cross-site visits, listservs, and surveys.

Oregon, continued from page 2

program-related research beyond the strict experiment/control model approach in part because the more practical, indicators-oriented research is not as valued in academic circles. It can be difficult to publish such research, and publication is the lifeblood of the body academic. Academic culture must shift towards a greater appreciation for research in the service of practice if we are to have the amount and quality of research needed to keep the social indicators field moving forward.

Researchers need to develop new measures that can be gathered economically in the context of service delivery. This means developing scales based on a few key questions rather than the lengthy scales common to academic research, focussing more on developing program case records as data sources, and thinking creatively about how indicators based on the observations of front line staff can be developed. In addition, the field needs more positive indicators of child and youth well-being than are currently available through existing state and local data sources. Reflecting this need, many of Oregon's communities have expressed an interest in using the Search Institute's assets-oriented *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey. (See "A Positive Look at Today's Youth," this issue.)

Who Can Benefit from Dr. Pratt's Work? The many states and hundreds of communities that have turned to social indicators to aid in their planning and program design all face this problem: how to link the activities of individual programs to broader policy goals in a way that can be measured and tracked over time. In addition to her work in Oregon, Dr. Pratt has been consulting with researchers and government staff from the states of California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Copies of Dr. Pratt's reports, which describe interim measures and the research behind them, have been distributed all over the country. These reports, which can be ordered from OCCF, include: *Building Results: From Wellness Goals to Positive Outcomes for Oregon's Children, Youth, and Families* and *Building Results II: Measuring Outcomes for Oregon's Children, Youth, and Families.*

Interim Indicators Coming to the World Wide Web. The OCCF is developing an online database containing interim indicators being used by those at the community level receiving OCCF funds. It will include data on who is being served, what kind of service is being provided, and what outcomes are being focussed on and whether they are being achieved. The database is expected to be available to the public on the OCCF website around July 2000.

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kids count

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The full contact information and web addresses for all state KIDS COUNT organizations can be found on the Annie E. Casey Foundation's website at http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/kc1999/contacts.htm.

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A Positive Look At Today's Youth

When communities begin to focus on youth, conversation often goes beyond concern with negative outcomes such as smoking, drugs, violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school, to a discussion of positive attributes that communities want for their youth. The excitement that discussions of positive youth development often produce is inevitably tempered, however, by the realization that available sources of data on youth focus almost exclusively on negative outcomes.

The Search Institute has long recognized this need for data on positive aspects of youth development. Through years of work reviewing existing youth development literature and pursuing their own research, Search has developed a survey of developmental assets called the *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*. The 156 question survey covers 20 internal and 20 external assets across eight areas:

External Assets include the positive experiences and support young people receive from their social environment including family, peers, and institutions such as schools:
- Support
- Empowerment
- Boundaries and Expectations
- Constructive Use of Time

Internal Assets include the personal characteristics of youth that guide choices and create a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus:
- Commitment to Learning
- Positive Values
- Social Competencies
- Positive Identity

With help from the Search Institute, hundreds of communities around the country have administered this survey to youth in grades 6 through 12. This information is used to help design community strategies to build a healthier environment for youth and increase positive outcomes.

The Search Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the well-being of adolescents and children through research, the effective communication of research findings to professional and lay audiences, the development of practical tools for the field, as well as training and technical assistance.

Vermont Takes Positive Look on Youth . . .
Vermont has been a leader in the use of social indicator data to inform policy and program planning at the state and local levels. Several factors led the state to adopt the Search Institute's survey. First, as communities in Vermont became more active in the use of social indicators to guide community development and program planning efforts, the need for positive indicators became increasingly evident and local groups began asking state agencies how they might produce such data. Second, Vermont wanted to find more effective ways to work with youth. Feedback from youth suggested that they "don't like to hear exclusively about the negative ways they're perceived" according to David Murphey, Senior Policy Analyst for Vermont's Agency of Human Services.

In 1997 and 1998, with support from the Search Institute, the state Agency for Human Services, and the state Department of Education, Vermont communities administered the *Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey to over 20,000 students between 6th and 12th grade. This year, the state will support survey administration in 50 additional schools that did not participate the first time around. A Child Indicators grant from the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, provided funds for this effort.

The Vermont Agency of Human Services and the state Department of Education coordinated the survey. These agencies prepared the way for the survey by working closely in advance with school administrators explaining the utility of the information that would be gathered, answering concerns about some of the sensitive issues covered by the survey (e.g., sexual behaviors), and providing training in the administration of the survey. The Search Institute was very helpful and thorough in providing technical support on how to properly oversee the survey process and how to ensure confidentiality, according to Mr. Murphey.

The state of Vermont is making effective use of the data compiled. At present, the Department of Education requires each school to submit an action plan for how it will increase students' performance in school. The results from the survey are often incorporated into such action plans. In addition, data on five of the 40 assets have been included in a publication of the Agency of Human Services called *Community Profiles*. Separate profiles for 60 communities within the state are produced featuring data on about 50 indicators of well-being. They are used widely for community planning throughout the state. In addition, the state has established the Vermont Resiliency Network, a resource to share strategies for increasing the level of positive youth assets at the community level.

For more information on the Search Institute and their survey:
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Healthy People Moves Into the New Millennium

On January 24th, Surgeon General David Satcher and Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala launched *Healthy People 2010*, a comprehensive national effort to improve the health of all Americans. Building on over 20 years of experience, *Healthy People 2010* identifies 467 health objectives in 28 priority areas for the coming decade. All of the objectives were chosen with extensive input from members of the Healthy People Consortium (which includes over 350 national organizations and 250 state public health, mental health, substance abuse, and environmental agencies). Consortium members will also shoulder a large portion of the responsibility for seeing that the objectives are met over the next ten years. In addition, teams of experts inside and outside the federal government provided the best scientific information available to inform final choices for the objectives.

The use of health indicator data to track progress towards these objectives is a core feature of the Healthy People initiative. Specific, reachable targets are identified for each objective where data are available to track progress. For example, the teen pregnancy objective calls for rates to be reduced from 72 per 1000 in 1995 to 46 per 1000 by 2010. Objectives that cannot be tracked with available data sources, called *developmental objectives*, are put on the national agenda for data collection. Such objectives have in the past led to the development of whole new systems of data collection. For the 2010 initiative, developmental objectives still lacking data sources at the national level by the year 2004 will be dropped.

Youth Objectives. According to the Center for Disease Control's Division of Adolescent and School Health (CDC-DASH), nearly 100 of the objectives are relevant to youth ages 10 to 24, and 20 are specifically identified as critical objectives for this age group. These include:

- overall youth mortality and the leading causes of death among youth (suicide, vehicle crashes, and homicide);
- behaviors related to youth mortality such as physical violence, carrying weapons, suicide attempts, and seat belt use;
- substance use including tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs; outcomes and behaviors related to sexual activity including pregnancy, abstinence combined with increased condom use among the sexually active, and STDs; and
- obesity and regular exercise.

A mental health objective is also under serious consideration. Critical objectives for infant and child health are separately identified under one of the priority areas called Maternal, Infant, and Child Health.

Healthy People Resources. For those interested in learning more about this important initiative, a comprehensive description is contained in *Healthy People 2010: Conference Edition*, available as a two-volume document, on CD-ROM, or directly over the Internet at http://web.health.gov/healthypeople/Document. The report includes an overview of the goals and objectives of the initiative, separate chapters for each of the 28 priority areas, and descriptions of the major data sources that will be used to track progress on the objectives.

DATA2010 is a searchable online database containing baseline and tracking data for every objective where available, the target objective for 2010, and separate estimates for select population subgroups. Only national data are included at present, but state estimates are expected to be added in the future. The database, which will be available soon, is part of the CDC/WONDER system at http://wonder.cdc.gov and will also be accessible through the Healthy People 2010 website (see below).

Finally, the *Healthy People Toolkit*, available online from the Public Health Foundation, provides resources and guidance to states, territories, tribes, and communities to assist them in developing and promoting their own Healthy People 2010 plans. It can be downloaded at http://web.health.gov/healthypeople/state/toolkit/default.htm.

For more information contact:
Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
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Fax (202) 205-9478
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For information on adolescent objectives contact:
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Data Takes

Contextual Data Archive

Researchers who want to examine population, social, and economic indicators may be interested in the Contextual Data Archive (CDA). Sociometrics, a California social science research firm, received funding from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to develop the CDA. The CDA includes 13 different data sets, each focussing on a different geographic unit of analysis ranging from Census tracts and zip codes to states and school districts. The oldest data are from 1970. The variables can either be analyzed on their own, or they can be merged onto individual-level datasets to provide contextual background information in micro analyses. In addition to the data sets, Sociometrics also sells an article abstract database that provides examples of studies that have included contextual data.

The state, city, and county datasets in particular provide a broad range of information, including thousands of variables each from a variety of sources, in addition to Census data. For example, the state dataset includes data obtained from the Census, National Center for Education Statistics, Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, the Urban Institute, Child Trends, U.S. Department of Justice, Centers for Disease Control, Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers University, American Dental Association, National Education Association, and the Alan Guttmacher Institute. Although using multiple sources means that the files contain information on diverse topics from health to crime to funding of social service programs, it also means that not all estimates are available for the same years, and the methods used to measure different concepts are not always comparable.

To learn more about Census definitions of different geographical areas, consult the Geographic Areas Reference Manual, November 1994, available online at http://www.census.gov/geo/www/garm.html. To obtain the CDA or browse the variables available in the CDA online, visit the Sociometrics web site at http://www.socio.com.

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The Social Health of the Nation: Do We Need an Annual Checkup?

by Mark S. Littman

Marc and Marque-Luisa Miringoff (professors at Fordham University and Vassar College, respectively) think it is time that both America's leaders and the public had a regular and official gauge of the social health of the nation, akin to our official economic gauges. A comparison of economic and social indicators shows that they do not always track in the same direction and that monitoring only economic areas gives a stilted picture of change in America. The well-being of children and youth, the availability of health care, the adequacy of housing, job satisfaction, and quality of education are not included in economic portraits of America.

In their book, *The Social Health of the Nation: How America is Really Doing*, the Miringoffs call for an annual checkup on the social health of the nation, just as we presently conduct for its economic health. Like economic indicators, the Miringoffs contend, social indicators warrant monitoring so that we know (and presumably so that policy makers can then act on) whether such indicators are improving (such as life expectancy), worsening (like, until very recently, teen suicide rates), or have vacillated in the past few decades (such as the availability of affordable housing).

The Miringoff's new effort on social indicators, funded by the Ford Foundation, builds on the labor of a distinguished working group convened in 1997 by The Fordham Institute for Innovation in Social Policy. This group, which included the Miringoffs as project directors, developed strategies for "improving the current governmental system of social statistics, enhancing the impact of the community indicators movement now emerging across the nation, and enriching the ways in which the media cover social conditions" (pg. vi).

The United States would not be the sole country gauging its social health. Most European countries already issue social conditions and trends reports individually as well as through such multi-national agencies as Eurostat, the statistical office for the European Union. Nor would the Miringoffs' proposal be the first attempt to compile social indicators in the United States. The federal government published three reports in the 1970's on social indicators, coordinated by the Office of

continued on page 4

Announcements

National Kids Count Data Book 2000

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT project compares states on specific indicators of child well-being and tracks trends over time. This year's National KIDS COUNT Data Book, released on June 20, 2000, also highlights the importance of strong communities for children. The report can be found at http://www.kidscount.org.

Statement of Purpose

The goal of **The Child Indicator** is to communicate major developments within each sector of the child and youth indicators field to the larger community of interested users, researchers, and data developers on a regular basis. Each issue includes articles on projects and programs using child and youth indicators at the national, state, and community levels, with occasional reports on international projects. In addition, we feature new developments in scientific research and data development, as well as useful resources including publications, web sites, and listservs. By promoting the efficient sharing of knowledge, ideas, and resources, **The Child Indicator** seeks to advance understanding within the child and youth indicators community and to make all its members more effective in their work.

Child Trends, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research center that has been active in the child and youth indicators field for 20 years, produces and distributes **The Child Indicator** with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We welcome your comments and suggestions. All communications regarding this newsletter can be directed to childindicator@childtrends.org.

Brett Brown, Ph.D. and Sharon Vandivere, M.P.P., Editors

State Scene

Maine: Child Indicators in Policymaking Partnership

The Child Indicators in Policymaking Partnership (CIPP), a collaborative of several state agencies in Maine, is attempting to use social indicator data to shape policies designed to promote children's health and well-being. These partners, who include the Departments of Human Services, Education, Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Substance Abuse Services, Public Safety, and Corrections, as well as the Maine Children's Alliance (KIDS COUNT), and the Maine Development Foundation have set four primary project aims. First, the partnership adopted a common set of "vision statements" or goals pertaining to children's health and well-being from the Governor's Children Cabinet. These statements, recently revised, include declarations that Maine values:

- Children respected, safe, and nurtured in their communities;
- Children ready to enter school and schools ready for children;
- Children succeeding in school and schools succeeding for children;
- Youth succeeding in high school education;
- Youth prepared to enter the workforce;
- Families having opportunities to work and play;
- Families recognizing the rewards and responsibilities of raising children;
- Families living safe and healthy lives;
- Communities capable of meeting the needs of children and families in all of their diversity;
- Communities creating collaborative partnerships;
- Communities promoting and modeling clear standards of behavior; and
- Communities keeping children and families at the heart of all of their decisions.

The next stage of work for the Partnership is to produce a set of social indicators that can be used to track progress on each of the twelve elements of the completed vision statement. The indicators, to be called Maine's Marks, will include both deficit and strength-based measures of well-being. The preliminary set of indicators will be reviewed and revised by a panel of experts including researchers, government staff, and policy specialists through the end of May 2000. Committee members will examine the type and scope of indicators and their importance, try to identify missing indicators, and attempt to find straightforward, clear ways to measure and report the data.

Upon completion of the selection of indicators, the Partnership will work to facilitate the development of communication and dissemination channels between policymakers and program staff to ensure that the indicators are really used to shape and direct policymaking in Maine. The final goal of the project is to create a user-friendly way to present the indicator data to the public, policymakers, and the research community.

continued on page 5

Gauging a Neighborhood's Pulse: Measures for Community Research from The Aspen Institute

by Mark S. Littman

Communities are important to children's development. As children venture from the home, neighborhoods are among the first places they learn to interact with others in society. Neighborhoods are also where children and youth develop (or not) a sense of safety and belonging, and where they receive (to greater or lesser extent) support from social, religious, health and educational services. Identifying the variation in children's well-being across different communities is a first step in understanding and rectifying deficiencies in the well-being of children.

Developing measures of child well-being that can be used across communities is one of the goals of the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives (the Roundtable). While this may sound like an easy task, there are many conceptual problems, beginning with the definition of community. In this case "the neighborhood" sounds like the relevant geographic unit of analysis, but there is little consensus on what constitutes a neighborhood. Should it be defined by residents' sense of community identity, or by some purely demographic or political gauge? Even when that issue is resolved, there may not be data that is collected at that particular unit of geography. Census blocks, for example, are typically not representative of what we might think of as a neighborhood; neighbors across the street are in a separate block using Census geography. Claudia Coulton, from the Center for Urban Poverty and Social Change at Case Western University, has outlined some of these definitional problems in her paper "Using Community-Level Indicators of Children's Well-Being in Comprehensive Community Initiatives" in the Aspen publication *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives* (this publication can be downloaded free from the Roundtable webpage).

The Measures for Community Research database developed through the Roundtable is a collection of measures that can be used to gauge and track a wide variety of community-level characteristics and to evaluate local community development and action programs. This collection of indicators has been divided into eight areas referred to as strands: Community Building, Economic Development, Employment, Education, Housing and Neighborhood Conditions, Neighborhood Safety, Social Services, and Youth Development. The database does not include raw data; rather it consists of descriptions of particular surveys, scales, or a single data item that can be used to assess the health of communities. The description of these measures includes the actual questions used as well as the setting in which they were asked, interview instructions, the survey questionnaire when available, references if any, and names/address contact information for the particular measure. For example, under the Community Building strand, 36 different surveys, scales, or data items are listed, including a mix of social psychological measures, administrative, and demographic data. They include such diverse gauges as the Seattle Community Attachment Survey, the Sense of Community Index, the Rural Community Attachment measure, and voter registration records. Another measure in this strand is Neighborhood Context, developed by researchers at Case Western Reserve University with the intent of gauging "aspects of the neighborhood context that are salient to the well-being of young children in that neighborhood." Questions include availability of resources, participation in neighborhood activities, social interactions with neighbors, perceptions of neighborhood quality, identity, and stability, and direction of neighborhood change.

The Roundtable does not endorse nor has it evaluated any particular measure, although the database includes statistical information about reliability and validity when available. Some measures are in the public domain, such as government statistics released by the Census Bureau or law enforcement agencies. Some scales require the permission of the researchers who developed them (actual detailed questions are only included when the author's permission for public use was obtained). One of the Roundtable's reasons for promulgating these measures is the hope the database will "highlight areas where measures are needed and stimulate the development of new measures." The Measures for Community Research database, first placed on the Internet in November 1999, will be updated frequently as new measures are obtained. The website also includes links to such sources as guides to finding and using administrative data and research techniques.

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The Aspen Institute
www.aspeninst.org
Community Building Resource Exchange
www.commbuild.org
Measures for Community Research
http://209.227.87.23/

Annual Checkup, continued from page 1

Management and Budget and the Bureau of the Census. And individual agencies now publish indicators-like reports for their particular area of responsibility. But no government-wide annual effort at reporting on the social health of the nation is currently undertaken.

The Miringoffs' book discusses seven criteria for selecting social indicators. All the indicators should:

(1) have been measured on a consistent basis for the past two or three decades;

(2) reflect conditions of persons of different ages - children, youth, adults and the aged;

(3) reflect a balance between purely social and socio-economic dimensions;

(4) address longstanding issues that have been the focus of public debate;

(5) be available by subgroups categories such as sex and race;

(6) be able to be compared internationally; and

(7) "have undergone significant change, reflecting an important alteration in performance over time" (pg. 42).

Trends in sixteen social indicators, chosen as illustrative for their book, are discussed in detail by the Miringoffs. They include infant mortality, child abuse, child poverty, youth suicide, teenage drug use, high school dropout rates, teen birth rates, unemployment rates, wages, health care coverage, poverty of the aged, life expectancy at age 65, crime rates, alcohol-related traffic fatalities, affordable housing, and income inequality. The Miringoffs' analysis includes several insights into missing policy and data in the United States - for example there is no clear and consistent policy towards reversing teen suicide rate increases over the past several decades, nor data to support which type of intervention works best (pg. 91).

A unique contribution in their book is the Miringoffs' efforts in their concluding chapters to delineate how to judge the nation's performance on these indicators and how to advance the field of social indicators. Economic indicators are often compared to the most recent comparable point in the business cycle. Alternatively, indicators might be compared to the previous year, or 10 or 20 years ago. The Miringoffs recommend that "judging the current performance of these sixteen indicators against their best level achieved in the past, tells us much about how we are doing as a nation and where we may be headed. At present, only three of the indicators are at their best level since 1970, while many others are significantly below the standard of performance that has been achieved in the past..." (pg.153).

The Miringoffs contend that new indicators need to be developed to monitor our society's cohesion, diversity and social engagement. Towards that end, a new National Social Survey was proposed and will soon be in the field to monitor the nation's social conditions. Such a survey will help address such questions as whether there are periods of "social" recession, or whether there are chain reactions in social health. If, for example, drug use becomes more common among children, can generational increases in suicide and crime be expected? Are there tipping points or thresholds beyond which such chain reactions are likely? Conversely, what are the effects of changes such as reducing the poverty rate by 5 percentage points? Does this portend higher high school or college completion rates? Other areas of data collection proposed include such currently undermeasured gauges as job satisfaction, economic security and leisure. Some proposed improvements in data do not require new surveys, but simply more frequent measures and quicker release of data. "If issues such as teenage suicide or child abuse were reported quarterly, for example, a far more acute view of social change and the relationships among indicators would be possible. Social trends could be observed and understood as they were occurring, rather than months or even years after the fact" (pg. 163).

And finally the Miringoffs propose new structures of government, as well as enhanced relationships between the government, social science researchers, and the press. A Council of Social Advisors to the President (and functioning outside the purview of any agency that administers social programs such as the Department of Health and Human Services) is proposed, charged with presenting a picture of the social health of the nation on an ongoing basis without having to defend a particular departmental policy. An annual social report of the United States is also proposed, akin to the current Economic Report of the President. "Such a document would be composed of selected, objective data providing a profile of the social health of the nation...The United States is the only developed nation in the world that does not issue such a public document" (pg. 165). It is the Miringoffs' hope that this deficiency will be corrected.

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The Social Health of the Nation: How America is Really Doing (Oxford University Press, New York, 1999)

Beyond Survival: International Researchers Break New Ground

In 1995 a group of international experts launched an effort to redefine the field of child and youth indicators. Major shifts in the conceptualization of child well-being and in its measurement were making existing measures and data sources inadequate as tools to monitor well-being and guide policy.

The international experts identified four major shifts:

- ***From survival to beyond survival.*** *The International Convention of the Rights of the Child*, a United Nations document signed by all but two countries (the United States and Somalia) emphasized a broad range of desirable outcomes and supports to which all children have a right. This stood in contrast to many national and international data systems that focused primarily on child mortality and morbidity rather than broader issues such as proper social and psychological development, adequate material support, and appropriate levels of child and youth participation in the decisions that affect their lives.
- ***From negative to positive.*** Existing measures of well-being were too focused on negative outcomes to be avoided rather than positive outcomes to be developed.
- ***From well-becoming to well-being.*** Child and youth indicators focused too heavily on the preparation for adulthood (well-becoming) rather than the present well-being of the child.
- ***From traditional to new domains.*** Traditional domains of well-being tended to be defined by discipline (e.g., health, education) or social services. An inter-disciplinary understanding of well-being together with the above mentioned shifts are leading to the development of some new domains.

Asher Ben-Arieh of the Israeli National Council for the Child led a consortium of 11 co-sponsoring organizations in a 3-year effort involving 80 experts in 28 countries to discuss the implications of these shifts for future work in the indicators field. The group settled on a guiding framework that includes 5 domains of well-being: personal life skills; civil life skills; safety and health status; economic resources and economic contributions of children; and children's activities. The framework was not intended to be exhaustive, but to encourage new and more creative thinking about what nations decide to measure and track. The group identified a total of 49 key indicators across the five domains. Some of them can be tracked now, while others will require the development of new measures and new data sources.

The results of this group's work have been summarized in a number of articles and two books. The first, titled *Measuring and Monitoring the State of Children - Beyond Survival,* was published in 1997 by the European Center in Vienna. The second, titled *Measuring and Monitoring Children's Well Being*, is due to be published late this year by the Kluwer Academic Press.

A core working group has been making plans for the next phase of the project, which is to operationalize the framework and indicators by launching a series of coordinated pilot surveys across multiple countries. Likely locations for these projects include the United States, Italy, Israel, and Scandinavia. The consortium strongly encourages other researchers to join the effort and launch similar studies in their own countries.

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Maine, continued from page 2

In order to find ways to make indicators of child well-being relevant to the lives of young people, the CIPP is collaborating with the Maine School of Science and Mathematics (MSSM), a magnet high school in northern Maine that draws students from across the state. The MSSM students are also developing the CIPP website and helping to manage feedback regarding the selection of indicators.

The Maine CIPP model presents an innovative set of collaborations between policymakers, experts, and students brought together with the hope of devising a well-informed, relevant set of indicators that can be used to further public policy aimed at children, youth, and families. It will certainly be interesting to track its progress as the process continues to unfold.

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Mapping Data

by Cheryl Stauffer

Data mapping software can be powerful tools for the presentation and analysis of child, youth, and family indicator data. With them users can display regional differences in well-being or social need, and can identify spatial relationships between indicators in ways that are informative for planning, policy, and research. For example, by presenting the location of licensed child-care centers together with the location of those most in need of such services, one can easily and intuitively convey the location of under-served areas.

Those who wish to map their indicator data have several software options ranging from thematic mapping programs to Geographic Information Systems (GIS). These products differ in their graphical display functions, the tools they offer for spatial presentation and analysis, and their complexity and degree of user friendliness. Deciding which package is best for you will depend on your project needs, present and future, and your general comfort level with complex software programs.

Thematic Mappers

Thematic mappers are quick and easy, out-of-the-box software systems that create geographic displays of statistical data based on a particular theme or indicator. The software utilizes data stored in a spreadsheet or database. The thematic or choropleth map produced reveals the distribution of a single attribute or indicator or the relationship among several. These systems can easily be used to create a county-level or census tract-level map of information already stored in one's own spreadsheet or database. For example, a thematic map can be made to show poverty distribution by county or the number of uninsured children by census tract. The choropleth map at the bottom of this page shows the percentage of children in poverty by county. This map can be used to illustrate where there are high concentrations of poverty among children in the United States.

Geographic Information Systems

A Geographic Information System (GIS) goes a step further. While it is capable of creating thematic maps, it is also able to manipulate and analyze data through spatial queries. A GIS is a tool used to find answers to questions about how indicators are related with other indicators and locations, if a pattern or trend exists, and how to determine and evaluate locations and the allocation of services. For example, a GIS can be used in determining the attendance zone boundaries for schools by estimating the number of children who are within a particular boundary. A GIS can evaluate whether or not there is a pattern in the location of certain crimes in relation to city parks, and can display that relationship graphically. This tool can also be used to determine if health care facilities are accessible to people living in certain neighborhoods.

What is the right software for you?

Making the decision to incorporate a mapping software program or a GIS into an organization's projects can be challenging. Thematic mapping programs are cheaper and easier to learn, but their capabilities do not extend into spatial analysis. Some programs only provide a limited amount of geographic boundary files. For exam-

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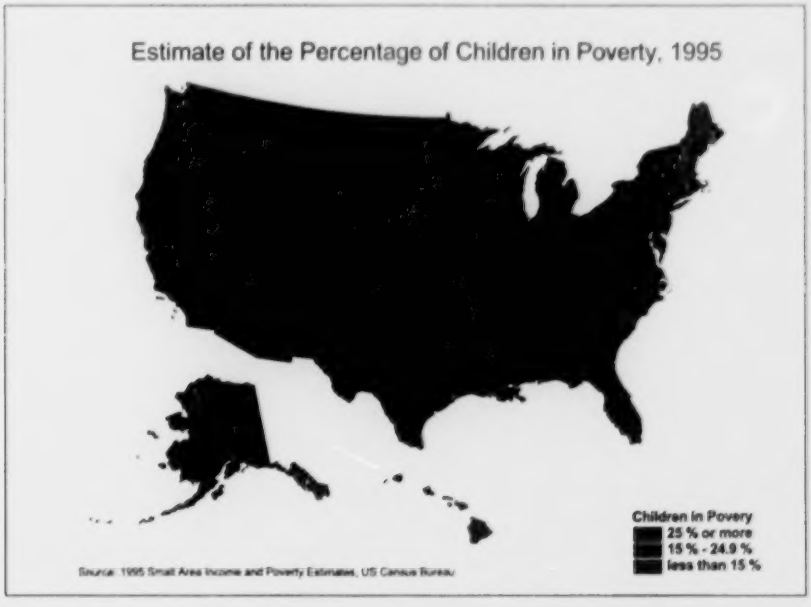
Estimate of the Percentage of Children in Poverty, 1995
Children in Povery
25 % or more
15 % - 24.9 %
less than 15 %
Source: 1995 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, US Census Bureau

Mapping, continued from page 6 ple, they may only allow for county-level mapping and not the mapping of city points or school district boundaries. GIS software packages can be expensive and have a steep learning curve, though more user-friendly versions are available that have basic spatial analysis capabilities to conduct most procedures. The advantage of purchasing such a program even if its more advanced capabilities are not needed immediately is that it is perfectly capable of doing simple thematic maps, but allows for more extensive spatial analysis if such needs arise in the future.

Those who use social indicators for planning and program purposes at the state and community levels will find these data mapping packages to be particularly valuable tools, opening up new possibilities to effectively communicate and analyze their data. A number of popular GIS and thematic mapping packages are listed below, including contact and pricing information.

Software Packages:
Thematic Mappers
MapViewer: Golden Software, Inc.
http://www.goldensoftware.com
1-800-972-1021

MapPoint 2000: Microsoft
http://www.microsoft.com/office/mappoint/default.htm

Geographic Information Systems
Community 2020: Maptitude and US HUD
http://www.hud.gov/adm/2020soft.html
1-800-998-9999

Maptitude: Caliper Corporation
http://www.caliper.com/maptovu.htm
617-527-4700

ArcView GIS: Earth Systems Research Institute, Inc.
http://www.esri.com/software/arcview/index.html
1-800-447-9778 (800-GIS-XPRT).

MapInfo
http://www.mapinfo.com/
1-800-327-8627

Further Information:
Getting to Know Desktop GIS by Earth Systems Research Institute, Inc.
http://www.esri.com/library/dtgis/front.html

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TRENDS IN THE WELL-BEING OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN & YOUTH: 1999

Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth: 1999 is the fourth edition of an annual report funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and prepared by Child Trends. Drawing on national data from reliable sources such as the Bureau of the Census, Vital Statistics Reports, and other national surveys, *Trends* is a useful one-stop resource for national estimates of child and youth well-being.

The report uses text, tables, and figures to present data. Graphics depict key trends and important population subgroup differences, while tables provide more detailed information. Accompanying text explains the importance of the indicator and highlights the most salient features of the data.

The report encompasses more than 90 indicators from various developmental areas that contribute to a child's well-being. Indicators are organized into five broad areas:

- population, family, and neighborhood;
- economic security;
- health conditions and health care;
- social development, behavioral health, and teen fertility; and
- education and achievement.

As the need for information in new areas emerges and data sources develop, new indicators are periodically added to the annual *Trends* report. This edition features two new indicators:

- arts proficiency for children in grade 8, and
- student computer use.

The new edition of *Trends* also includes two special articles by Urban Institute researchers exploring data on teen risk behaviors. The articles, "Changes in Risk-Taking among High School Students, 1991 - 1997: Evidence from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys" and "Multiple Threats: The Co-Occurrence of Teen Health Risk Behaviors," detail the incidence of 10 health-risk behaviors (for example, regular alcohol use, suicidal thoughts, and sexual intercourse) and their co-occurrence among 7th through 12th graders.

Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth: 1999 can be ordered from the U.S. Government Printing Office at http://bookstore.gpo.gov/index.html or (202) 512-1800. In addition, a limited number of free copies are available from DHHS/ASPE. Send requests by fax to Joyce Marshall at (202) 690-5514. A PDF version of the document is available at http://aspe.hhs.gov.

Resources

The Future of Children

A particularly useful resource to the child indicator field can be found in the *Future of Children*, a journal publication by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Distributed free of charge three times a year to policy makers, legislators, researchers and other professionals in both the public and private sectors, the journal often includes a focus paper on a key social indicator of the well being of children, entitled "Child Indicators." Each of these focus papers, primarily authored by Nancy Kerrebrock and Eugene M. Lewit, Ph.D., analyzes important indicators in areas like child health, income, poverty, social services, and education, as well as discussing resulting policy implications and limitations. Particular attention is given to issues of indicator definition, measurement, data sources, and defining characteristics of the particular effected population. The important function of drawing these links between the detailed indicator research currently being done and the resulting policy implications make this piece of the *Future of Children* a valuable and comprehensive tool for the child indicator field.

The "Child Indicator" section has been discontinued as a regular feature from upcoming *Future of Children* publications, but all past issues (1991 to present) can be accessed in HTML or PDF format via the *Future of Children* website: www.futureofchildren.org. For more information, email circulation@futureofchildren.org or call the Foundation at (650) 948-7658. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation is located at 300 Second Street, Suite 200, Los Altos, CA 94022.

Teenagers and their Parents in the 21st Century

A new report entitled "Teenagers and their Parents in the 21st Century: An Examination of Trends in Teen Behavior and the Role of Parental Involvement" is available for download in PDF format at http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/New/html/teenconf.html. This report by the President's Council of Economic Advisers examines positive trends among adolescents including increases in student achievement, college access, and participation in community service, as well as declining rates of pregnancy, teen suicides, and homicides. The report notes beneficial effects of parental engagement in adolescents' lives. It was released at the White House Conference on Teenagers: Raising Responsible and Resourceful Youth held on May 2, 2000.

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National Education Goals Panel Celebrates a Decade of Accomplishment

The 1990s was a decade of revolution in the education field, which moved toward a greater emphasis on goals, measurable outcomes, and accountability for results. The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) has played an important role in this transformation by: 1) reporting regularly on state and national progress towards key education goals; 2) encouraging the adoption of voluntary education standards among the states and development of assessment tools to measure them; and 3) identifying and sharing information on the most promising policies and programs to meet those goals.

The NEGP is a bipartisan, multi-level government effort whose members currently include eight governors, four members of Congress, four state legislators, and two members of the Executive branch, as well as support staff. This arrangement allows the NEGP to play a unique role building bipartisan consensus in the education field while taking into account the insights and the needs of actors across multiple levels of government.

For the past year the NEGP has been reflecting on past accomplishments, identifying whether there is a role for the NEGP in the coming decade and, if so, defining what that role will be. The Panel's most visible accomplishment has been the design and production of its annual *National Education Goals Report*, which provides state-level estimates on 34 indicators related to the eight national education goals. Governors and former governors attending the 10th anniversary meeting of the NEGP were clear that data allowing for comparisons across states are effective spurs to action. As Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson, the current Chair of the NEGP, put it, "... nobody likes to be a loser. Everybody likes to compare."

The NEGP has also played a role in increasing the supply of comparable data by identifying gaps and encouraging states to help fill them. This has been done in several ways including encouraging the voluntary adoption of common definitions (e.g., of high school dropout) in administrative data and by participating in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a periodic survey that generates comparable assessments in mathematics, reading, writing, science, and a variety of special subject areas for participating states.

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Announcements

In November, Child Trends and the Annie E. Casey Foundation will release new data books providing 1990-1998 information on **8 risks facing newborns for the top 50 cities in the U.S. and all 50 states.** Percentages of the following risk factors will be presented: total births to women under age 20, repeat teen births, total births to unmarried women, total births to mothers with less than 12 years of education, total births to mothers receiving late or no prenatal care, total births to mothers who smoked during pregnancy, low-birthweight babies, and preterm babies. For more information, contact Melissa Long at mlong@childtrends.org.

Statement of Purpose

The goal of **The Child Indicator** is to communicate major developments within each sector of the child and youth indicators field to the larger community of interested users, researchers, and data developers on a regular basis. Each issue includes articles on projects and programs using child and youth indicators at the national, state, and community levels, with occasional reports on international projects. In addition, we feature new developments in scientific research and data development, as well as useful resources including publications, Web sites, and listservs. By promoting the efficient sharing of knowledge, ideas, and resources, **The Child Indicator** seeks to advance understanding within the child and youth indicators community and to make all its members more effective in their work.

Child Trends, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research center that has been active in the child and youth indicators field for more than two decades, produces and distributes **The Child Indicator** with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We welcome your comments and suggestions. All communications regarding this newsletter can be directed to childindicator@childtrends.org.

Brett Brown, Ph.D. and Sharon Vandivere, M.P.P., Editors

Community Scene

Community-Level Indicators Projects: A New Source Book

A new inventory of community-level projects that use social indicator data to inform local policy will soon be released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The report, *Community-Level Indicators for Understanding Health and Human Services Issues: A Compendium of Selected Indicator Systems and Resource Organizations*, provides essential information on over 40 selected projects, including brief descriptions of project activities and goals, indicators and data sources used, project publications, and contact information. Both local and statewide programs are included. National groups that represent significant resources for those interested in developing indicators projects at the community level, such as the National Neighborhood Indicators Project, described in the Fall 1999 issue of **The Child Indicator**, are also included.

These projects reflect a variety of interests including health, quality of life, sustainable development, and child and youth well-being. Data on children, youth, and their families are a concern for most of these projects, though not always the central focus. This publication is a valuable resource for communities that are interested in using social indicators for planning and accountability and for government agencies at the state and federal levels that work with communities on health and service planning.

The report was compiled by the Research Triangle Institute and Child Trends under contract to the Office of Program Systems, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Copies will be available this fall over the Internet.

For more information, contact:
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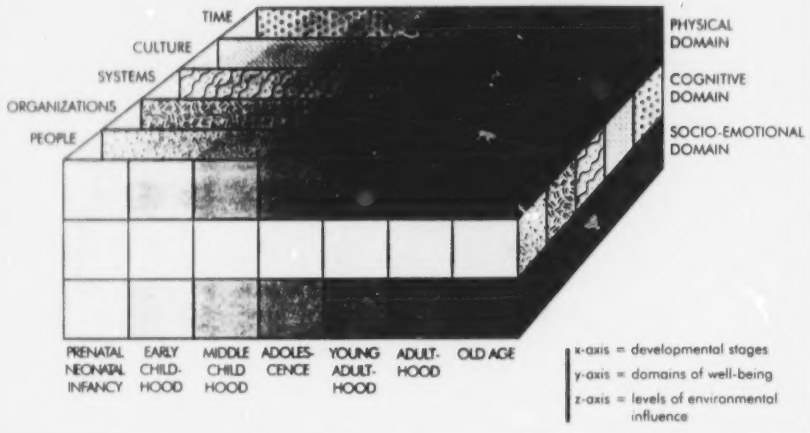
The Center for Child Well-Being (CCW): Focussing on a Strengths-Based Paradigm for Child Health and Development

The Center for Child Well-Being (CCW) was established to promote the well-being of children through expanding the knowledge base related to positive child development, disseminating that knowledge to those who have daily influence in the lives of children, and promoting programs and policies that foster child well-being. The CCW has already undertaken considerable theoretical work and research into identifying core elements of developmental well-being, examining them across the life span, and constructing a matrix that depicts their interrelationships (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Child Well-Being Matrix

Positive Elements Across the Life Span



The CCW aims to increase positive characteristics in all children and strengthen the environments in which they live and learn through the following five strategies:

- *Discovery*, to broaden the science of child well-being and to utilize this knowledge base to inform social norms, policy, and programs that benefit children.
- *Synthesis* of this knowledge with other expertise and experience from a variety of sources and perspectives addressing issues of child well-being.
- *Communication* of this improved understanding in order to change attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs about positive child development and stimulate the adoption of programs and practices that lead to positive development and outcomes.
- *Application* of strategies in public policy, governance, and fiscal settings to strengthen environments for positive child development.
- Finally, the hope of CCW is that this new knowledge and set of applications can be used as a *catalyst* to excite social action with the result being a change in political will, social norms, and investment of programs that emphasize and support positive child development.

Who are the partners?

The CCW and its partners include people who come from the disciplines of child development, psychiatry, sociology, medicine, and public health who have gathered together to study the socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical aspects of child well-being. The CCW is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is a program of the Task Force for Child Survival and Development and Prevention. The Executive Director is Dr. William H. Foege, former Director of the Centers for Disease Control, and the Program Director is Dr. Mark L. Rosenberg. The CCW, along with many organizations and individuals who have worked to improve child well-being over the years, such as Child Trends, NICHD, CDC, and the NICHD Family and Child Well-Being Research Network, is currently exploring four key questions:

- What are the positive characteristics that parents, families, and communities should foster?
- What are the best ways to promote dialogue with people and within communities about these characteristics in order to achieve change?
- What are the most effective ways to ensure that the information collected is distributed to and utilized equitably by all parents and communities?
- How can systems be integrated into the fabric of communities in such a way that they continue to sustain and promote these information and resource networks?

One of the first communication projects, a Web site for parents that gives guidance on fostering positive assets in their children, will be online in November 2000.

What is positive development?

One of the critical challenges initially facing the CCW was to construct an operational definition of what constitutes *well-being*. Working from the notion that well-being is "the ability to successfully, resiliently, and innovatively participate in the routines and activities deemed significant to a cultural community," and, pairing that with "the state of mind that individuals achieve through this participation," the investigators settled on a definition that takes a positive, social-ecological approach to

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Easy Access to Juvenile Justice Data

Easy Access is a family of software packages developed for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ). The OJJDP uses this software to make available to the public recent, accurate, and detailed data on juvenile crime and the juvenile justice system at the national, state, and local levels. The accessibility and ease of use of this kind of information, both in the download of the software and the analysis of data, is extremely valuable to the child indicator field, particularly in research involving delinquency, risk behavior, and outcomes.

There are six packages in all. Three are described below. The other three include information from the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement, county-level juvenile court case counts, and population data.

Supplementary Homicide Reports
The FBI's Supplementary Homicide Reports provide data on both homicide victims and offenders, including age, sex, weapon used, and victim-offender relationship. These data can be examined at both the state and national level. Juvenile data specifically can be broken out by the age groups 0-3, 4-11, and 12-17. State and national profiles allow for easy examination of trends, while cross tabulation allows for more specific queries. Results are presented in tabular and graphic formats and can be stored in output files that are easily read by spreadsheet or word processing packages.

Juvenile Court Statistics
This package allows analysis of the annual Juvenile Court Statistics report database, representing estimates of over 13 million disposed delinquency cases handled by United States courts with juvenile jurisdiction between 1988 and 1997 at the national level. This database serves as a primary source of information on juvenile court activities in the United States. The National Juvenile Court Data Archive, maintained at the National Center for Juvenile Justice, collects these data and prepares the annual Juvenile Court Statistics reports. Demographic, offense, and case processing variables are included, allowing users to develop detailed descriptions of the delinquency cases processed in the nation's juvenile courts. Data are presented in tabular and graphic formats that can be saved to output files for use in word processing and spreadsheet applications.

FBI Arrest Statistics
The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) consist of data on index crimes (each of seven major crimes) and arrests voluntarily pooled from thousands of police agencies and reported to the FBI each year. The package gives national, state, and county-level arrest rate estimates for all offenders, juveniles and adults, and the percent of all arrests involving juveniles and adults. Results can be saved to output files that are easily read by spreadsheet or word processing software.

The NCJJ, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, is a private, nonprofit organization established to improve the effectiveness of the juvenile justice systems response to juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and child neglect through research and technical assistance. The NCJJ conducts applied, basic, and legal research on a broad range of juvenile justice topics and provides technical assistance to juvenile justice professionals across the country including information on model programs and court automation.

For more information and free access to these products, visit: http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/index.html

NEGP, continued from page 1

Since the Panel was first convened ten years ago, the number of states that have adopted specific education standards has grown from a handful to 49, and the number fielding state assessments that measure those standards has grown to 39. The NEGP has played a strong supporting role in this process, encouraging the adoption of standards and developing supporting materials to inform state activities.

In discussing future directions, Panel members have identified the development of more comparable state-level data measured more frequently as a top priority. State NAEP assessments, for example, are currently carried out only once every four years. Data on the schools, taken from the Schools and Staffing Survey, are collected even less frequently. A Measuring Success Task Force has been assembled to recommend ways to speed up and increase data availability and to suggest reporting procedures for the coming decade.

Members of the Panel believe that the NEGP has an important and unique role to play in the coming decade. Whether it will be allowed to fulfill that role, however, is apparently a matter of some debate within Congress. In preparation for the next federal budget, a joint committee has recommended $1.5 million in funding for the coming year, considerably less than the original request of $2.3 million. Such a level of funding may delay or prevent publication of the Panel's end-of-the-decade report, and may indicate uncertainty within Congress about the Panel's future role.

For more information, contact:
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More Hispanic Data Available from Federal Statistical Agencies

For several decades the federal government has included data on Hispanic children and families in their regular publications series. More recently, major federal statistical agencies have expanded and refined these efforts by:

- creating special publications and Web sites featuring data on Hispanics;
- publishing more estimates for Hispanic subgroups (e.g. Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, etc.); and
- treating Hispanics distinctly by creating estimates for major race groups that exclude Hispanics of those races (e.g. for non-Hispanic whites rather than all whites).

These efforts are an acknowledgement of the growing size and importance of the Hispanic population as well as the cultural and socioeconomic diversity that exists within it. Hispanics are now the largest minority group among persons under age 18, increasing from 9 percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 1999. By 2020, it is projected that more than 1 in 5 children in the United States will be of Hispanic origin.

Looking at children by race and ethnicity is important because systematic differences often exist among groups. For example, national estimates show that Hispanic children are less likely than non-Hispanic white and black children to be enrolled in early childhood education (26 percent versus 48 and 45 percent), less likely to be covered by health insurance (71 percent versus 89 and 81 percent), more likely to have a teen birth (94 per 1000 ages 15-19 versus 85 and 35 per 1000 in 1998), and more likely to drop out of high school. Groups within the Hispanic population also have distinct patterns of outcomes and access to resources that merit their separate treatment when possible. For example, Puerto Ricans have substantially higher rates of infant mortality and low birthweight than Mexicans, Cubans, and Central/South Americans.

The U.S. Census Bureau has created a useful Web site making available vast amounts of data on Hispanics, including social and economic characteristics and population estimates and projections. Social characteristics include child care, education, health insurance coverage, fertility, and voting. Similar sites have been developed for black, Asian, and Native American populations. The address for the Hispanic site is: http://www.census.gov/pubinfo/www/hisphot1.html.

The National Center for Health Statistics also regularly publishes fertility data that include estimates for Hispanic subgroups. 1998 estimates can be found in *Births: Final Data for 1998: National Vital Statistics Reports*, 48 (3), which can be downloaded at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm. Other reports that include estimates for Hispanics can also be found there as well. Finally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed a Web site in Spanish that supplies health information and health data. The address is http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/default.htm.

CCW, continued from page 3

well-being relevant across the life span. Within this definition, *core elements* of well-being are operationally defined as: "Clusters of positive behaviors, skills, competencies, and/or characteristics that correlate with favorable health and developmental outcomes; that promote the health and adaptive functioning necessary for well-being; that prevent or mitigate illness and dysfunction that would diminish well-being; and that may be cultivated within the ecology of genetic and environmental influences."

What are the core elements?

The CCW and its partners are in the process of deciding upon the specific factors that constitute the *core elements of child well-being*. The CCW project intends to examine each of these core elements across the developmental span, the different domains of well-being (physical, cognitive, emotional, and social), and the different levels of environmental influence in order to present a complete picture of the progression of positive well-being. For example, in the socio-emotional domain, a number of key factors are being examined. Factors such as *warmth*, or emotional closeness between children and parents or their peers play an integral part in shaping the direction of their future relationships. The *support and responsiveness* that children receive from the people around them help to forge their perspective of the world as an orderly or, alternatively, a chaotic place. Children's *adaptiveness* is crucial to their coping with ever-changing environments and potential hazards along the course of their development. *Controlled challenges* present opportunities for children to hone conflict resolution skills and begin to explore the realm of personal autonomy. Through their *sense of self*, children begin to create their own identity and discover their uniqueness, their strengths and their weaknesses. And, as they grow and interact with others, *sympathy and empathy* serve as critical guideposts for the development of prosocial behavior and a strong moral character.

A book summarizing the scientific underpinnings of the project will be completed in the fall of 2000.

For more information, contact:
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Resources

America's Children

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, a coalition of federal agencies, recently released *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2000*, their fourth annual report. This edition includes 23 indicators of children's well-being, eight socio-demographic measures, and two special features, "Beginning Kindergartners' Knowledge and Skills," and "Youth Participation in Volunteer Activities." You can obtain a copy through the National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse (while supplies last) at 703-356-1964 or nmchc@circsol.com, or you can view HTML and PDF versions at http://childstats.gov.

Teen risk behaviors

A new report called *Teen Risk-Taking: A Statistical Portraït* explores teen engagement in health risk behaviors such as smoking, fighting, and using drugs. Looking at data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, the National Survey of Adolescent Males, and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Laura Duberstein Lindberg of the Urban Institute and co-authors Scott Boggess, Laura Porter, and Sean Williams found that multiple risk-taking declined between 1991 and 1997. Suprisingly, researchers also found that youth who do take risks are likely to engage in positive behaviors as well, such as doing well in school, attending religious services, participating in extracurricular activities, and spending time with parents. The report is available from the Urban Institute Office of Public Affairs (202) 261-5709 or http://www.urban.org, or you can download the PDF file from http://www.urban.org/family/TeenRiskTaking.pdf.

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The Child, Youth, and Family Indicators Newsletter

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The 2000 Census: Measures of Child Well-Being and Data Products

by Mark Mather, Population Reference Bureau

The decennial census is our best source for state and local estimates of the social and economic circumstances that shape the lives of America's 70 million children. Data from the 2000 census will be more accessible than previous census data, and all those with access to the World Wide Web will have a wealth of national, state, and local data on children, youth, and families at their fingertips.

The decennial census has two components. The short form, or 100-percent questionnaire, was mailed to every housing unit in the United States and includes questions about relationship to householder, race, gender, home ownership, age, and ethnicity. About one in six households nationwide also received the long form, or sample questionnaire, which includes additional questions about marital status, citizenship, education, migration, disability, employment, income, public assistance, and household characteristics.

The first data on children from the 2000 census will be released in March 2001 for local and congressional redistricting. These data, from the 100-percent questionnaire, will include counts of the total population and the adult population (ages 18 and older) by race and Hispanic origin. The number of children in each racial/ethnic group can be calculated by subtracting the adult population from the total population.

Between June and September 2001, the Census Bureau will release more detailed tables from the short form, including counts of children by single year of age and basic cross-tabulations of age, gender, race, Hispanic origin, home ownership, and relationship to householder, including the number of children living with nonrelatives, in single or dual-parent households, or in group quarters. Data from the 100-percent questionnaire will be available for geographic areas down to the block level.

Tables from the long-form questionnaire are scheduled to be released between December 2001 and March 2002, but some of the more detailed data files will not be available until 2003. Long-form tables will include information on child poverty; welfare assistance; parental employment, earnings, and educational attainment; school enrollment; idle teens (high school dropouts who are not working); physical limitation; children in linguistically isolated house-holds; country of birth; and migration in the past five years.

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Announcements

We welcome your feedback! Please send us notices about upcoming conferences, publications, or events and we will try to feature them in this space. Contact us at childindicator@childtrends.org or by mail at:

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Statement of Purpose

The goal of **The Child Indicator** is to communicate major developments within each sector of the child and youth indicators field to the larger community of interested users, researchers, and data developers on a regular basis. Each issue includes articles on projects and programs using child and youth indicators at the national, state, and community levels, with occasional reports on international projects. In addition, we feature new developments in scientific research and data development, as well as useful resources including publications, Web sites, and listservs. By promoting the efficient sharing of knowledge, ideas, and resources, **The Child Indicator** seeks to advance understanding within the child and youth indicators community and to make all its members more effective in their work.

Child Trends, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research center that has been active in the child and youth indicators field for more than two decades, produces and distributes **The Child Indicator** with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We welcome your comments and suggestions. All communications regarding this newsletter can be directed to childindicator@childtrends.org.

Brett Brown, Ph.D. and Sharon Vandivere, M.P.P., Editors

State Scene

State Child Welfare Indicator Data Available Online

The Child Welfare League of America's (CWLA) National Data Analysis System (NDAS) is the nation's first comprehensive, on-line, interactive child welfare database. In cooperation with state child welfare agencies, CWLA developed the NDAS to promote effective integration of research, policy, and practice.

The NDAS is an online data system providing users with ready access to child welfare administrative and fiscal data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The web site has seven sections including:

- Introduction: provides an overview of the content and capabilities of the NDAS, as well as cautionary notes on the use of the data.
- Help Section: provides technical assistance to the user.
- Data Sources: includes a list of the data sources and basic descriptions for each source.
- State Summaries: includes general descriptions of the child welfare system for each state and contact information.
- Data Dictionary: provides basic information and definitions for data elements, groups, and calculations in the system.
- Tables and Graphs: allows the user to specify tables and graphs to be generated from the NDAS database.
- Internet Links: links to national and state child welfare web sites.

The system provides data to the user in the form of pre-defined tables and graphs for particular topics. The user can specify which states and which years appear in the tables and graphs. Brief notes on the data for each state are always included in the table or graph, with links to more detailed notes. Users can compare their state to neighboring states or states with similar populations, or they can specify their own set of comparison states. National estimates can also be included in the comparisons. These tables and graphs can be printed out or downloaded for further analysis and manipulation.

User-defined tables, which provide the user with greater flexibility in specifying what data will appear, are not presently available as an option for the general public, though agency staff from the participating states (34 are currently supporting members of the NDAS) are able to produce such tables. Once this capability is further developed, it will probably be made available to all users.

National and state-level data are included in the NDAS. Data below the state level (e.g., county-specific estimates) are not included in the system. The NDAS includes data from these sources and for the following years:

SOURCE	YEAR
■ National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS):	1990-1997
■ Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS):	1990-1995
■ CWLA State Child Welfare Agency Survey Data:	1996-1998
■ Child Welfare Fiscal Data from the Green Book:	1990-1996
■ State Child Welfare Expenditure Data collected by the Urban Institute:	1996
■ Population data from the U.S. Census Bureau:	1990-1998

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New Indicators of School Readiness from the ELCS-K

by Jerry West, National Center for Education Statistics

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has designed and conducted several national longitudinal studies of school-age children. The newest member of NCES' longitudinal studies, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of the Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), began following a cohort of kindergartners in the fall of 1998. Its purpose is to provide a comprehensive and reliable data set that can be used to inform policies and practices related to early and middle childhood education. The ECLS-K sample is nationally representative of children who were enrolled in kindergarten in the fall of 1998 and includes about 22,000 kindergartners in over 1,000 public and private kindergartens. Data are collected from and about these children, their families, and their schools in the fall and spring of kindergarten, the fall and spring of first grade, the spring of third grade, and the spring of fifth grade.

The ECLS-K is a rich new source of data for indicators of school readiness. The study captures important information on the knowledge and skills that children have as they arrive at school for the first time. This information is not limited to children's academic skills, but includes information about their social skills, problem behaviors, approaches to learning, and fine and gross motor development. Also, children's height and weight are measured repeatedly over the life of the study, providing information on children's physical development.

The ECLS-K direct cognitive assessment was designed to measure children's status in reading, mathematics, and general knowledge at particular stages in their education careers and to measure gains and growth in these domains over the early school years. Analysts can use the ECLS-K assessment data to study changes in children's overall achievement in reading, mathematics, and general knowledge. In addition, gains in particular sets of skills within the reading and mathematics content areas (e.g., letter recognition within reading and identifying numbers and shapes within mathematics) can be distinguished from gains in children's overall achievement in reading and mathematics. This feature of the ECLS-K assessment allows analysts to study the particular sets of skills that different groups of children acquire during the kindergarten year.

In addition to serving as a source for indicators of children's beginning school knowledge and skills, the ECLS-K captures data on the same children's teachers, classrooms, and schools. These data can be used to address issues related to the readiness of schools for children. The study captures a wealth of data on teacher qualifications and experience and classroom curricula, materials, and practices. Data on school policies and programs are available, including data on schools' outreach to incoming students and transitional activities.

Data from the parent interviews conducted at the beginning and end of the kindergarten year can be used to develop indicators of children's home life and family circumstances. By design, the ECLS-K parent interviews include items that are also included in the National Household Education Survey (NHES), a repeat cross-sectional survey of contemporary education issues. For example, the ECLS-K includes the National Household Education Survey (NHES) questions on children's early care and education participation and home literacy that have been used in many NCES reports and in a variety of federal indicator reports (e.g., *The National Education Goals Report* and *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-being*).

A major strength of the ECLS-K study design is the ability to link child assessment data with data from teachers, classrooms, schools, and parents. Thus, it is possible to evaluate the extent to which a variety of home, classroom, and school indicators are associated with child outcomes in the short- and long-term. It is also possible to evaluate which indicators are particularly strong and the conditions under which particular indicators work and do not work.

NCES has released two reports based on the first two rounds of data collection. The first report, *America's Kindergartners*, describes the beginning school knowledge and skills of children as they enter kindergarten for the first time. The second report, *The Kindergarten Year*, describes gains in these same children's reading and mathematics achievement across the school year and changes in their social skills and problem behaviors. Both reports examine the relationship of children's knowledge and skills to child, family, and school characteristics, with an emphasis on family risk factors (e.g., low maternal education, non-English language, poverty, and single parent family).

More information on the ECLS-K and other NCES surveys is available at the NCES web site, http://nces.ed.gov. Copies of ECLS-K reports can be viewed and downloaded from the ECLS-K web site, http://nces.ed.gov/ecls. If you have questions about the ECLS-K, e-mail project staff at ECLS@ed.gov.

Research Takes

A Single Index of Child Well-Being

One number to capture the overall well-being of children in the United States? This is the ambitious goal of Ken Land, Duke University researcher, and the Foundation for Child Development that sponsors his work. Dozens of indicators of well-being available from the federal statistical system tell us how children are doing in particular aspects of their lives, but there are no generally accepted measures to tell us how they are doing overall.

Dr. Land is developing the index in much the same way economists developed the Consumer Price Index, by grouping like measures together into broad domains of well-being, then combining the domains into a single index. Working with seven domains taken from '*quality of life*' research, he uses a total of 28 measures distributed as follows:

- Material Well-being (4)
- Social Relationships (2)
- Health (6)
- Safety/Behavioral Concerns (6)
- Productive Activity (2)
- Place in Community (5)
- Emotional/Spiritual Well-being (3)

The resulting index allows one to track overall well-being at the national level on an annual basis from 1985 to the present. A separate index using 25 measures is also being developed which could be used to track well-being as far back as 1975. Multiple versions of the index, as well as various domain-specific indices, have been tested by Dr. Land to create the most robust measure possible, one that is not too heavily affected by a single domain, age group, or outcome. He acknowledges that a number of the domains are inadequately represented in the index due to a lack of available information in particular domains.

In fact, Professor Land's work identifies significant gaps in the current national indicator system for child well-being, gaps that make the construction of a single, robust indicator of child well-being problematic until some of them are filled in. In particular, measurement and data in the areas of emotional well-being and social relationships of children need to be strengthened. Until that time, Dr. Land suggests that the domain-specific indices are more sound measures of particular elements of child well-being than the overall index. Further, it may be most appropriate to use this summary index in conjunction with individual indicators to provide a more complete and accurate picture of child well-being in the United States. In summary, Dr. Land's work is a major step forward in improving our stock of child well-being indicators and in stimulating important and influential research.

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The 2000 Census, continued from page 1

Data from the long form will be available for geographic areas down to the block group or neighborhood level.

Those who have used data from the 1990 census will find some important differences in the 2000 data. One question relevant to children's issues--the number of children ever born--was dropped from the questionnaire, while another--grandparents as caregivers--was added. The latter was added to provide information on the number of grandparents who have primary responsibility for grandchildren in the household. A more significant change in 2000 is the revised question on racial identification; this is the first census in which respondents were allowed to mark more than one race. In 1990, there were five race categories: white, black, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, and "other race." The 2000 census included six basic race categories: white, black, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and "some other race." But because respondents could, for the first time, identify with multiple racial groups, there are 63 possible race combinations. These multiple race categories will complicate comparisons of 2000 data with 1990 data, especially for children, who are more likely than adults to be identified as multiracial.

Data users will also face the possibility of a two-number census: one set of numbers that is based on the actual enumeration of the population, and another set that has been adjusted for undercounts of the population. Despite the best efforts of the Census Bureau, it is not possible to count everyone through a physical enumeration of the entire population. The Bureau estimates that more than 2 million children were missed in the 1990 census, accounting for more than half the total net undercount. After the 1990 census, the Census Bureau conducted a "post-enumeration" survey to estimate those who were missed, and a similar survey has been conducted in 2000. Therefore, when the Census Bureau releases the redistricting data in early 2001, it plans to include both adjusted and unadjusted numbers.

Data users will notice that there are fewer printed products from the 2000 census, compared with earlier censuses. Data from the 2000 census will be available primarily on CD-ROM, DVD, and through the Census Bureau's online data retrieval system, American FactFinder (http://factfinder.census.gov). American FactFinder permits users to view, print, save, and download data from the Internet. The system currently provides access to data from the 1990 census, the American Community Survey, the 2000 Census Dress Rehearsal, and the 1997 Economic Census.

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a relatively new survey that could replace the decennial census long form in 2010, by collecting essentially the same information throughout the

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The 2000 Census, continued from page 4

decade rather than once every 10 years (see Volume I, Issue 1 of the Child Indicator Newsletter for more details). The ACS has already been tested in 31 sites, and assuming full Congressional funding, will be implemented nationwide in 2003. Data will first become available in mid-2004 for geographic areas with 65,000 people or more, and will be updated every year thereafter. A related survey, called the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey (C2SS), is currently being tested nationwide in order to compare data derived from the ACS questionnaire with data from the 2000 Census. The Census Bureau plans to release state-level estimates from the C2SS as early as July 2001. This means that data users will be able to assess the status and well-being of children, for states, almost two years prior to the release of the 2000 census long-form data.

Data users can learn more about the 2000 census and the American Community Survey by visiting the Census Bureau's Web site at http://www.census.gov.

States, continued from page 2

The NCANDS includes state administrative data on child abuse and neglect cases, while VCIS provides data on foster care and adoption. Foster care and adoption data from the AFCARS system will be added in the future. Fiscal data are available from the Green Book (an annual publication of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives) and from a state-by-state survey conducted by the Urban Institute in 1997. The CWLA State Child Welfare Agency Survey includes data on child abuse and neglect, child welfare-related fatalities, out-of-home care, adoption, family preservation and support, as well as fiscal and other administrative data. The CWLA survey attempts to collect information that complements what is already collected in systems such as the NCANDS, though there is some overlap. Population estimates from the Census Bureau are used primarily as denominators to produce rates based on the incidence data in the NCANDS and other data sources.

The data in the NDAS are heavily notated with detailed definitions and with information on data collection and storage processes in each state. These notes are especially important for responsible use of the data because of the differences in definitions and procedures used to collect child welfare data in each state. Each of the participating states in the NDAS provides the notes for data from their state. States that are not formal participants are also invited to supply these notes, and many do so. These notes are presented uncensored in the NDAS system. There are presently over 2000 detailed notes in the NDAS system covering data for 1996. More notes will be added for previous years as time allows, and notes will be added for new data as they are added to the system.

The CWLA cautions users against making facile comparisons across states because of the lack of interstate comparability for many of the measures contained in the NDAS system. Cautionary notes appear on all tables and graphs. These issues are well covered in the introductory section of the web site as well.

The address of the NDAS web site is http://ndas.cwla.org
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Resources

Child Welfare Outcomes 1998

The first edition of an annual report compiling national and state data about children in the child welfare system, *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998*, has recently been released. This report responds to the first-ever Congressional mandate (via the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997) for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to assess the performance of state child welfare agencies.

The indicators in the report were selected in order to track states' progress in meeting performance objectives for children's safety, permanency, and well-being, including the:

- reduction of the recurrence of child abuse and/or neglect,
- reduction of the incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care,
- increase in permanent placements for children in foster care,
- reduction in time in foster care to reunification without increases in re-entry,
- reduction in time spent in foster care to adoption,
- increase in permanent placements, and
- reduction in placements of young children in group homes or institutions.

To select and develop the outcome measures, HHS collaborated with state, county, municipal, and tribal governments, and local child advocacy organizations. A consultation group comprised of representatives from a number of national organizations established four guiding principles. Outcome measures selected should:

- "reflect performance that is to a large extent within the control of state child welfare systems",
- "be assessed in ways that limit the potential for misinterpretation",

continue on back page

The Knight Foundation's Community Indicators Project

A promising new set of quality of life indicators for 26 cities served by the Knight Foundation is now publicly available for researchers, foundations, and citizens. The Foundation hopes that by collecting data relevant to its Community Initiatives program it can accomplish three goals. First, the data will be used to provide a better descriptive picture of the communities in which the Foundation funds projects and will allow for more accurate evaluations of program impacts. Second, community groups within the Knight Foundation's 26 communities of interest will be able to share the data and work collaboratively to examine best practices and successful programmatic strategies. Finally, the Foundation intends to disseminate its information to key national organizations so that the data and lessons can be used to advance knowledge and practice across the country.

The Foundation collected both survey and administrative data to measure the quality of life in its communities. A 15-minute telephone survey of adults was conducted in 500-800 households in each of the 26 communities. The survey included a core questionnaire used at all the sites as well as four questions customized to each individual community. The survey covers issues of community involvement (e.g., volunteering, financial contribution) and attitudes regarding community institutions, programs, and problems. Separate estimates for all the questions have been produced for parents living with children under age 18. In addition, questions that specifically relate to children and youth include adult activities in and attitudes towards community schools and youth programs, whether unsupervised children and youth are a major problem in the community, the supply of affordable quality child care, and which groups have the biggest influence on teens.

In addition to the survey data, the Foundation compiled administrative data from multiple sources to develop administrative data profiles for each of the Knight communities. These profiles track trends and focus on the quality of life indicators in the Foundation's seven areas of grant-making: arts and culture, children/social welfare, citizenship, community development, education, homelessness, and literacy. The data collected on children and social welfare include information on vital statistics, health care providers, and juvenile incarceration.

In an effort to compensate for the dearth of data on participation in arts and culture, the Foundation measured attitudes about arts, volunteerism in the arts, charitable giving in the arts, and arts attendance in these communities. In addition, they worked with the Urban Institute to record descriptive data on the nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in the 26 communities, and they utilized the collaborative effort of RMC Research and Americans for the Arts to devise long-term strategies for these nonprofit organizations to assess their community's cultural health and needs.

The Foundation's initial community profiles, which include data from both the survey and administrative data sources, were completed in July of 2000 and will be updated approximately every three years, or as data become available in the interim. The first wave of data tables, profiles, and reports can be found on the Internet at: http://www.knightfdn.org/indicators/indicators.html .

For more information, please contact John Bare, the Knight Foundation's Director of Evaluation, at bare@knightfdn.org or (305) 908-2600.

The 26 Knight Foundation Communities are:

- Aberdeen, South Dakota
- Akron, Ohio
- Biloxi, Mississippi
- Boca Raton, Florida
- Boulder, Colorado
- Bradenton, Florida
- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Columbia, South Carolina
- Columbus, Georgia
- Detroit, Michigan
- Duluth, Minnesota
- Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Gary, Indiana
- Grand Forks, North Dakota
- Lexington, Kentucky
- Long Beach, California
- Macon, Georgia
- Miami, Florida
- Milledgeville, Georgia
- Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- St. Paul, Minnesota
- San Jose, California
- State College, Pennsylvania
- Tallahassee, Florida
- Wichita, Kansas

Data Takes

Census Releases New Local Area Child Poverty Estimates

The U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program has just released 1997 estimates of income and poverty for states, counties and school districts. Estimates of the number of related children ages 5 to 17 in poor families are available at all three geographic levels. Estimates for the total number of poor children under age 18 are available at the state and county level, but not for school districts.

At present there are state-level estimates for 1989, 1993, 1995, 1996, and 1997; county-level estimates for 1989, 1993, 1995, and 1997; and school district estimates for 1995 and 1997. In the future, state estimates are to be produced every year, and county and school district estimates in odd numbered years.

For access to these estimates, visit http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe.html.

A New Clearinghouse for International Data and Policies on Children, Youth, and their Families

The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies provides cross-national comparative social indicator data and information about the policies, programs, benefits and services available in advanced industrialized countries to address child, youth, and family needs. In addition to the United State, featured countries include most of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and most of Europe. The Clearinghouse, part of Columbia University's Institute for Child and Family Policy, plans to expand to other countries and parts of the world.

Of special interest is the *Social Indicators* section of the Clearinghouse web site. This section provides comparable indicators on children, youth, and family well-being from various international sources. The *Health* area reports on health indicators and immunizations. The *Poverty* area reports on child poverty using different definitions of poverty and also poverty by family type, including "lone mother." The *Education* area includes enrollment, scholastic achievement, and education and work status of young men and women. The fourth indicator area, *Youth Indicators*, focuses on variety of young adult behaviors including enrollment/completion of upper secondary education, death rates, suicide and homicide rates among young men, smoking, drinking, and sexual activity and condom use. Data are displayed as tables available in PDF files.

Many social indicator users will be happy to know that the Clearinghouse plans to expand its coverage of "positive" development of youth well-being. The Clearinghouse recognizes that both in Europe and the United State, there is currently interest in youth development as a pro-active, not deficit-oriented, philosophy. However, the Clearinghouse notes, there is little in the way of systematic data collection and multi-country comparisons, for example, activities that promote youth participation, civic engagement, and volunteer activity. The Clearinghouse is therefore planning to collect and report country-level data in these categories.

What makes this web site even more valuable to many social indicator users is the policy and background information that is provided in addition to social indicators. The *Comparative Child, Youth and Family Policies and Programs* section provides cross-national information about the policy regimes and programs for the focus countries in the following areas: parental and family leave; early childhood care and education; family and child allowances; child and family tax benefits; child support and other income transfers; child and adolescent health; housing benefits; policies and programs for school age children and youth; and reconciling work and family life.

The *Background and Context Data* section offers cross-national comparative tables for all or some countries covering basic social expenditures, demographic trends, the roles of government and employers, the role of families and women, national income, income distribution, and total government expenditures for the focus countries.

Users who need information about specific focus countries should search the *Countries* section of the Clearinghouse. This section offers an analytic profile characterizing each country's policy regime and a brief summary of highlights. In addition, contact names of individual experts as well as links to ministries and research centers are provided for further inquiry.

Finally, The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies provides valuable contact information and links to other sites, including the following: contact information for the indicators on the web site; country-specific agencies that can provide further information; a list of international publications and sources; links to a comprehensive list of international conventions, treaties, resolutions and directives concerning children, youth, and families; a list of research centers and international and national organizations; and a public bulletin board for discussion of child, youth and family policies.

For more information and free access to this resource, visit: http://childpolicyintl.org.

Resources, continued from page 5

- "be used to assess the continous improvements of each state over time, rather than compare the performance of states with one another", and
- "be based on data that are available through existing data collection systems in order to limit the reporting burden on the States".

In accordance with the fourth principle, much of the data come from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System (AFCARS). States received federal funding in 1993 to design and implement Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS) that will enhance their ability to collect data that can be contributed to federal databases such as AFCARS and NCANDS. However, as of May 2000, six states were still developing their SACWIS and 18 had not completed the implementation phase, so data for some indicators in some states are missing in *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998*.

In addition to the outcome data, background data related to states' progress toward meeting performance goals are also included. These measures include state demographics from 1997 and the number of children a) reported to child protective services, b) in foster care, c) waiting for adoption at the end of the year, and d) adopted by the end of the year.

To receive a copy of *Child Welfare Outcomes 1998: Annual Report*, contact the Clearinghouse at (800) FYI-3366 or by e-mail at nccanch@calib.com. To access the report electronically visit http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb/outcomes/childwelfare/index. html. Further information about child welfare can be obtained from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect at **http://www.calib.com/nccanch/.**

The Right Start

Trend data for eight measures of a healthy birth for every state and the nation's largest cities will be released on February 20, 2001 by Child Trends and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Right Start: State Trends and The Right Start: City Trends will present yearly data from 1990 through 1998. The publications can be ordered from the Annie E. Casey Foundation at www.aecf.org/publications. The data will also be available on Child Trends' web site, www.childtrends.org, and the Casey Foundation's site, www.aecf.org/kidscount.

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